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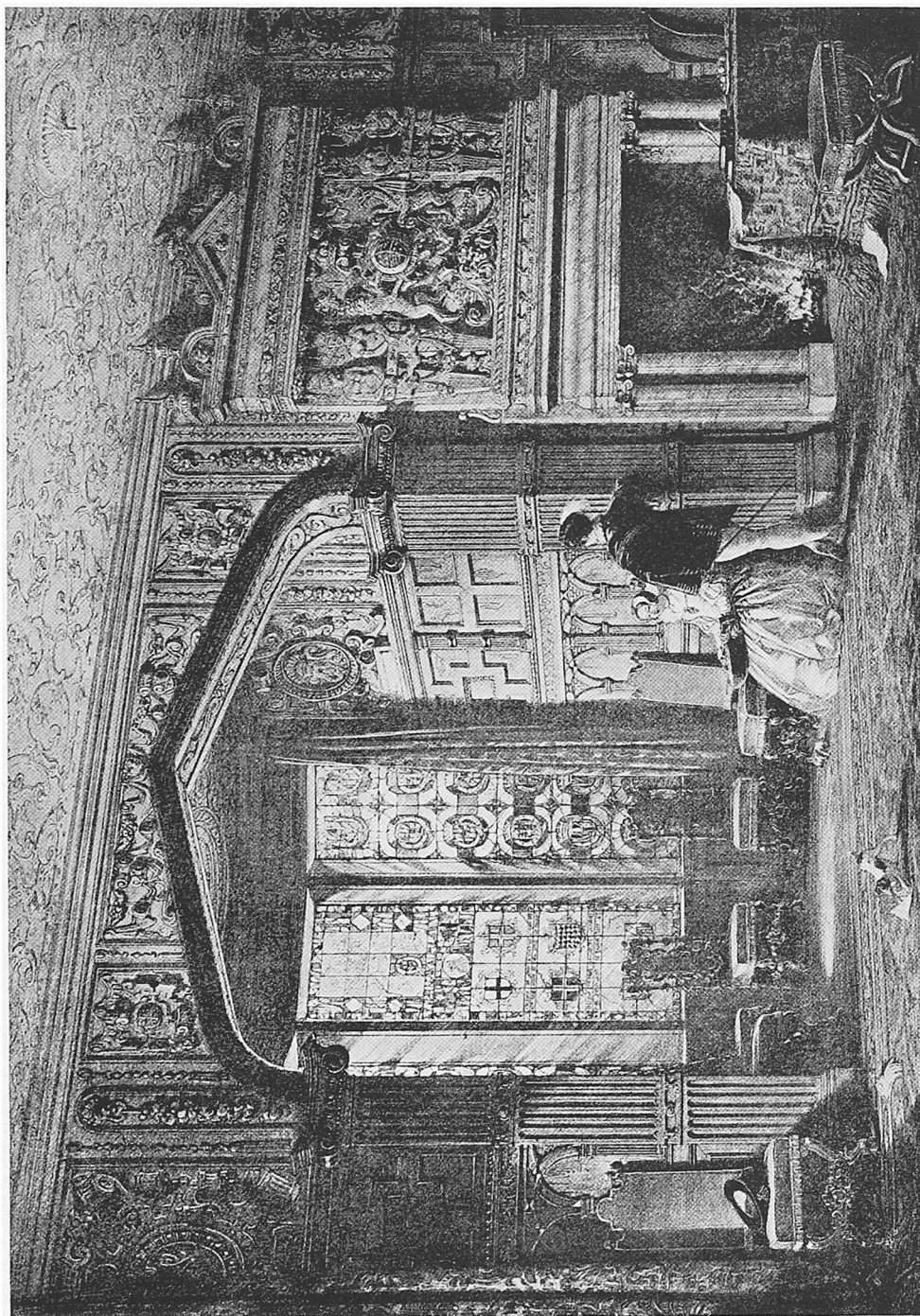
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Bay-Window at Lyme Hall, Cheshire

BAY-WINDOW AT LYME HALL

THE bay of the drawing-room in Lyme Hall, Cheshire, is so broad and deep that its proportions are sufficiently ample for a room by itself, or would be anywhere but in England where the apartments in the ancient mansions boast such large dimensions. In this bay one may observe, in the picture, a pleasant scene. A cavalier standing in an easy attitude is listening to the playing of a lute by a lady who is seated. A small dog lies near her. On the drawing-room floor outside the bay and some distance over from the group, lie two gauntlets with one of which another dog is playing. In the drawing-room is a richly ornate over-mantel and a table on which are some books and papers. The fact that all the details mentioned are incidental and not in any manner obtrusive, show how large is the bay-window itself.

Indeed this bay of the drawing-room is but proportioned to the mansion, which is of great extent. It is in the Palladian style of architecture. The family which owns it not only is a very old one, but has held it uninterruptedly since the days of the Black Prince, as will presently appear. But in 1817 the mansion underwent such extensive repairs that the drawing-room and bay represented in the illustration, gain additional importance from the fact that they form almost the only remaining portion of the interior of a style prior to the alteration of the building.

This room, as the illustration shows, is extraordinarily rich in the design of the stucco work and panelling. In the window of the bay are shields of stained glass of a rich colour, and these add much to the gorgeous solemnity of the effect of this large apartment which is further enhanced by a valuable set of family portraits that have hung there for many years.

Anderson, who has done valuable work in bringing Nash's original memoranda down to a more nearly contemporaneous date, gives a rather summary account of the rest of the interior of this fine mansion in Cheshire and occupying a position near the road from Manchester to Bolton, adjacent to the picturesque village of Disley. He states that there is a chapel in the mansion at Lyme; that the entrance hall contains a collection of arms and armour; that in the stag-room are preserved some of the relics of Charles I.; that the library contains not merely a choice collection of books, but some sculpture from Athens, and various Egyptian and Pompeian bronzes; that the ceiling of the grand staircase is worthy of notice, and there is a finely carved mantelpiece in the long room; that like many other old houses, Lyme has its "Ghost Room;" that the ceiling and the oak carving upon the walls of the saloon are magnificent; and that there is some tapestry and a considerable quantity of carved oak furniture at Lyme Hall.

The mansion occupies high ground. About it is an extensive park partaking of the varied surface and lonely character of the neighboring moors. A noble series of ancient thorn trees flourish upon the right hand side of the road or avenue that leads to the house. On an eminence to the left there rises a square tower, on looking down from the top of which, a superb panorama is seen to lie stretched out below.

Many traditions lurk within the shadows of this ancient park at Lyme. Near the Hall is a conical hill crowned with trees. From time immemorial this has been called "The Knight's Low." It is supposed to have been the dueling-place of one of the ancient knightly lords of Lyme. In another part of the estate, adjoining a stream that runs through the park, is a field, which has always been known as "the Lady's Grave", or even more romantically as "the Field of the White Lady."

Were the cavalier and his lady in the picture to step to one of the windows of the bay and look out into the park, they might see some of the wild cattle for which the park at Lyme is celebrated and which have been kept there from time immemorial, though the herd is now almost extinct. In Lyme park also is preserved a noble breed of dogs, known by the name of the Lyme mastiffs. A curious custom of driving the deer round the park about midsummer, or rather earlier, collecting them in a body before the house, and then swimming them through a pool of water, with which the exhibition terminated, was observed there

until toward the close of the eighteenth century. Possibly the print-collectors among LOTUS readers recall a large print of this custom by Vivares, after a painting by T. Smith. It represents Lyme Park during the performance of the annual swim, with the great vale of Cheshire and Lancashire, as far as the Rivington Hills in the distance, and in the foreground, the great body of deer passing through the pool, the last just entering it, and the old stags emerging on the opposite bank. Two of these are fighting with their forefeet on account of the tenderness of the horns rendering them unfit for combat at that season.

Lyme Hall has a fascinating history. When the flower of Cheshire Chivalry fought under their Earl, the Black Prince, at Cressy, Sir Thomas Danyers highly distinguished himself by relieving, when hard pressed, the banner of his earl, and making a prisoner of Tankerville, Chamberlain of France. He was handsomely rewarded and the lands of Hanley in Macclesfield forest (Lyme Hanley) were granted to his daughter and her third husband, Piers de Legh. Two years later (1399) when the insurgent forces of the Duke of Lancaster advanced into Cheshire, they seized Sir Piers in consequence of his attachment to his sovereign, and beheaded him at Chester. Sir Peter Legh, his son and heir, fought in the continental wars of Henry V. and dying at Paris of wounds received at Agincourt, they brought him back to England, and buried him with his father at Mansfield.